



Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 108th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

TUESDAY, February 24, 2004

House of Representatives

SAVING OUR LAND AND WATER BY CONTROLLING SALT CEDAR!

HON. BOB FILNER
OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MR. FILNER: Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2707. I thank the gentleman from New Mexico for his sponsorship and leadership. We have heard about how important it is to the areas of Texas and New Mexico. It is also important to my district, one of the most important agricultural areas in the United States, the Imperial Valley of California.

We use water from the Colorado River, and we have heard how invasive this Salt Cedar can be. In fact, the Imperial County Agriculture Commissioners Office and the Brawley, California Research Station have been studying for a long time now how to control Salt Cedar. John Kershaw, the president of the Imperial Valley Conservation Research Center Committee, and Stephen Birdsall, Imperial County Agricultural Commissioner, have briefed me on the great strides that have been made to controlling Salt Cedar in our area. This bill will greatly help with those efforts.

We have heard how much water these species use. Salt Cedar is like a giant straw: One tree can suck up to 200 gallons of water a day.

It can cause an increase in fire and flooding, a decrease in water quantity and quality and an increase in soil salinity. It can replace native species, degrade wildlife habitat, and limit the human use of riverbanks.

Salt Cedar was originally introduced in order to stabilize stream banks, but it has turned into a nightmare for our farming communities. We have spent millions of dollars trying to eradicate this pest. Million of gallons of water have been wasted. We have become increasingly concerned about water conservation and the best use of our natural resources in this Nation. Those of us who rely on the Colorado River see that Salt Cedar squanders this precious, precious water.

Removing it would allow native plants that have been squeezed out by the noxious

(over)

tree to come back to our community. Removing the tree would also encourage wildlife populations to increase, including several species, such as the Willow Flycatcher, that are declining or are threatened or endangered. The Flycatcher is an endangered bird that eats insects that thrive on native plants in my district, which the Salt Cedar has displaced.

I commend the Departments of Interior and Agriculture for their dedication to controlling or eradicating invasive species

such as Salt Cedar. We must continue this important work. We can protect our most precious natural resources, water, wildlife, and soil, by eradicating this invasive species.

Mr. Speaker, clearly these species are serious problems across all the United States, but particularly in the Southwest. The challenges they present to our communities are enormous, but we cannot let them ruin our natural native resources. We can and we must take back the land and water for our communities.